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C O N F I D E N T I A L COLOMBO 000424

SIPDIS

OFFICIAL INFORMAL

FOR SA/INS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/09/14

TAGS: [AMGT](#) [CE](#) [MV](#) [LTTE](#)

SUBJECT: OFFICIAL INFORMAL NUMBER 037 (03/09/04)

Classified by DCM James F. Entwistle for reasons 1.5 (b) and (d).

CONTENTS: LATEST ON LTTE SITUATION

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11. (C) We continue to monitor the situation in the east. As you know, it is not clear exactly what is transpiring amid many conflicting reports. Here are some of the latest items:

-- REPORTED KILLINGS: There are various reports that fighting has begun between the rival LTTE factions. The ISLAND newspaper reported today, for example, that "46 Tigers from both factions had been killed" (no date provided). Most of those killed were reportedly pro-Vanni elements. The Police Deputy Inspector General (DIG) told a visiting INL delegation today that he had heard that 36 pro-Vanni cadre had been killed by Karuna's faction. Other contacts, including in the SLMM, have vociferously denied that there have been any killings. Overall, we'd say that the killings story is not yet confirmed. Of course, as we have reported to you, a real bloodletting is possible.

-- HIGH TENSIONS IN EAST: From what we are hearing, there is a lot of tension throughout the east. There are a lot of rumors, etc., circulating that Prabhakaran is doing this, or Karuna doing that (see the above story re the killings, for example). We have heard reports that pro-Vanni types are planning a hartal (work stoppage) in Trincomalee District on March 10. By the way, we have heard that the Muslim population in the east is really worried about the situation (no surprise there!). Apparently, despite Karuna's pleas that he is a peacemaker, many Muslims are worried that his agenda is really anti-Muslim.

-- MEDIATION EFFORT: Roman Catholic Bishop of Batticaloa Kingsley Swampillai led a delegation to the Vanni on March 8 in an effort to mediate the Prabhakaran-Karuna dispute. While in the Vanni, he reportedly told S.P. Thamichelvam, the LTTE's political chief, that he (Swampillai) thought the dispute could be worked out peacefully. Swampillai reportedly used the occasion to note that eastern Tamils do have some legitimate concerns regarding their treatment by northern Tamils (Karuna has been asserting that this is the major reason for his rift with the LTTE leadership). The sum result of Swampillai's effort is still unclear. Karuna has already harshly rejected a LTTE offer of amnesty if he ends his rebellion (see Colombo 406).

-- REPORT RE TAMIL POLITICIAN: We have heard an interesting report that A. Chandraneheru, a TNA MP from Ampara District, participated in a pro-Karuna rally yesterday in which pictures of Prabhakaran were put to the torch. The main LTTE organization has reportedly called him up to the Vanni to discuss why he was at the rally. Chandraneheru has not indicated whether he plans to take the LTTE up on this intriguing offer. Chandraneheru's possible decision to work with Karuna is just one of the indications we are getting that Karuna, via coercion or otherwise, may be picking up some support in the east.

-- NORWEGIAN VISIT/CO-CHAIRS: Norwegian Special Envoy Erik Solheim is apparently in town for a conference. We understand that he plans to meet with Thamichelvam up in the Vanni. Karuna is not (yet) on his schedule, however. The Ambassador is attending a co-chairs meeting at COB Tuesday; we'll see what the thinking is there on the East and other issues. (POL)

LUNSTEAD